

SUBJECT: FCC Media Ownership Rules Review

SUMMARY:

I completely oppose the repeal or rewriting of the rules governing limits on Media Ownership detailed in the rules being reconsidered in the attachment. Please re-instate its traditional media ownership rules to ensure competition and democracy.

DETAIL:

It has come to my attention that the FCC is going to rule on a review of the rules listed in the attachment on 2 June 2003.

I am of the belief that these rules were put in place to preserve and further the primary goal of diversity of choice and fair competition on the US airwaves. These airwaves, like national parks and all other properties held in public trust are not owned by the government nor companies who can dole trade gifts for influence. They are to be regulated in the public interest and for the public good.

Relaxation of these rules would lead to further consolidation of public resources by a small number of powerful media conglomerates limiting the public's access to a diversity of perspective. I would have to have the same kind of choice on the airwaves I have when it comes to burgers (McDonalds) or coffee (Starbucks). They also have far-reaching interest conflicts regarding information reported or not for their own multilateral corporate interests. This and the resulting lack of competition would also drive up prices concerning media access and would just amount to another reversal of a good policy like the re-consolidation of the phone services that has played out since the breakup of AT&T.

The shocking lack of public discussion makes one wonder how the FCC could make an informed decision in the public interest without enough feedback from the public.

Sincerely,

David Toepfer

ATTACHMENT:

The FCC will review six broadcast ownership rules at its June 2 meeting. Here are the rules and the years they were originally adopted:

1. Newspaper/Broadcast Cross-Ownership Prohibition (1975)
 - * Television broadcast companies may not buy newspapers in communities where they own stations.

2. Local Radio Ownership Cap (1941)

* Limits the number of radio stations a company may own in a single market. For large markets, the limit is eight.

3. National TV Ownership (1941): remanded by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit.

* A television broadcast company may not own stations that reach more than 35 percent of the national audience.

4. Local TV Multiple Ownership, aka “Duopoly rule” (1964): remanded by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit.

* A single company may own two television stations in a single market only if one or both of the stations is not rated among the top four and there will still be at least eight remaining independent stations after the acquisition.

5. Radio/TV Cross-Ownership Restriction (1970)

* Limits ownership in the largest single markets to seven radio stations and one television station or six radio stations and two television stations; the limits are lower in smaller markets.

6. Dual Television Network Rule (1946)

* Prevents one company from owning two of the top four television broadcast networks.